

Cordova's Own Literary & Arts Quarterly

The **Catch**

SUMMER 2023



Through a Porthole

Issue No. 8

Mosasaur v. Megalodon by Lander Ammerman (Age 7) // Watercolor, Crayon & Ink

To receive a **free** digital copy of *The Catch* each quarter, Email: jillian.cordovapubliclibrary@gmail.com.

For a printed copy, please visit the library or museum at the Cordova Center.

All donations go to *Friends of the Library*.

Cordova & Friends,

Welcome back to *The Catch*. This issue (No. 8) marks our second complete year in production. The publication's design is to build community through the sharing of arts, and selves. Sharing broadens our collective *scope*; strengthens, enriches this human experience. **THANK YOU**, to every contributor over the past two years. Thanks for your encouragement, even as I've limped around editing software, learning as I go. Thanks for your trust in my intent to mindfully process and share your works, words. Thank you, also, to our readers – and this vibrant community that celebrates the arts.

See you in the Fall . . .



With Love & Gratitude,



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

ALL AGES. ALL MEDIUMS. NO ENTRY LIMIT.

Feature your art & writing in the **Fall 2023** issue (No. 9).

The theme is:

dreamscapes

Due by September 15th.

Email: jillian.cordovapubliclibrary@gmail.com **OR** stop by the circulation desk.

Mail: Cordova Public Library // ATTN The Catch // PO Box 1170 // Cordova, AK // 99574

Seasonal Catch

ARTWORKS

Lander Ammerman // FRONT COVER

Rob Ammerman // Page 31

Hasan Bowman // Page 30

Alysha Cypher // Page 5

JJ // Page 7

Polly Keats // Page 17

Cadence Moffitt // Page 23

Jude Nel // Page 28

Cristina Reo // Page 20

Steve Schoonmaker // Page 25

Leif Solberg // Page 19

Sofia Stopeck // Page 29

PHOTOGRAPHS

Sam Bair // Page 16

Kinsey Brown // Page 10

Chris Byrnes // Page 18

Jack Donachy // Page 33

David Grimes // Pages 27, 32

Sue Masolini // Page 12

Jenny Nakao // Page 21

Jude Nel // Page 9

David Saiget // Pages 4, 8, BACK COVER

Talia Sokolik // Page 11

WRITTEN WORKS

Harbor, Kayti, and Lander Ammerman // Page 17

Rob Ammerman // Page 5

Rebecca Andersen // Page 4

Ron Andersen // Pages 22-25

Christina Anderson // Page 31

Oshiana Black // Page 32

Erin Brennan // Page 21

Chris Byrnes // Page 16

Jack Donachy // Page 33

Jeanie Gold // Page 8

Jillian Gold // Pages 9, 18

Gerald Masolini // Pages 12-13

Cristina Reo // Page 20

Steve Schoonmaker // Pages 10-11, 29

Cathy Sherman // Pages 14-15

Leif Solberg // Page 19

Sammy Stripes // Pages 26-27

Mike Towle // Page 6

Title Fonts by Jillian Gold

DISCLAIMER

All views & expression in this publication exclusively reflect the participating artists
and do not, in any way, represent the views or opinions of the city or its members.

Each contributing Author/Artist is the sole copyright owner of their work and retains all rights to the work submitted.

Friends of the Library retains the copyright to *The Catch*, as a collective work.

There is occasional use of forceful language in this publication. **Please exercise reader discretion.**



Offering

By Rebecca L. Andersen

Through a hole in the wood
Looking back across the days
The wind rises, like a memory in the bones
Of your people's celebration . . .

My people's celebration,
Of our trials and celebrations that have come together,
And how the grandparents spoke
Of the confluence of blood and lifestreams
Worthy of a legacy seen
Through the prism of the new generation

Photograph by David Saiget

Submarine Dreaming [*a collection of haikus*]

By Rob Ammerman

Submarine dreaming
Tides pull the flesh from my bones
Pressure is building

Geysers from under
'neath the restless angler fish
Spread the candle light

Vents send life upward
Blind crabs consume detritus
What's left of me now?

Floating, sinking, it's
all the same to me, Ocean
labyrinth lengthens time

A maze of motion
Building up to tear it down
Corals craft beaches

Lava flows to sea
Shelters explode, now is new
found infinity



The Greatest Piece

By Mike Towle

It would be the greatest piece of his life, but the storm was growing and he had to retire to his state room if he were to try and capture it on canvas. He rushed to the cabin, slipping and sliding on the pitching deck, eager, excited, almost giddy, to put his brushes to work before the moment passed.

Sitting on his berth, his movements matched the intensity of the storm that raged outside. Only brief glances were spared through his porthole from time to time to try to conjure that moment, again and again, each time it began to fade from his mind. The tempest had given him the greatest inspiration he had ever been gifted. But the moment was fading, his vision clouding. The porthole became more and more opaque as the damp of the sea and the warmth of his “self” gathered upon the glass. He strained to peer through to the gale, longing to feel it again. It had to be just so!

The porthole fogged with each breath, the canvas filled with each stroke, until at last he could no longer see the ragged sea. The inspiration was gone, but the sensation remained there, on the canvas - a reminder of the beauty he had witnessed.

He had to see it again, to feel it completely, to ensure his masterpiece truly captured that which he experienced not long before. He left his painting by the porthole and struggled out on deck.

Facing the wind, he stood as the storm unleashed its raw power. There was nothing more to cloud his vision, nothing to shield him from each blow. And it filled him completely. And he had realized he had always been so, as it washed over him and carried him under . . .

A fishing vessel happened upon an unmanned ship drifting on a calm sea. The captain went aboard and noticed the deck had been swept clear of all contents save for a small hand mirror lodged in a port side scupper. He picked it up and looked upon it briefly through the watermarks left from the dried spray of the salty sea. Entering the cabin, he found nothing noteworthy among the items left behind other than a painting set on an easel facing toward, as if looking out, the state room porthole. The captain looked long upon the piece for it brought him great joy and comfort in the midst of this apparent tragedy.

While it was difficult to discern what may have been on the artist’s mind when he painted his self-portrait, it took only a moment to see that his heart was full.

It was the greatest piece of his life.



Experience it Until the Earth Exploses by JJ // Collage

Questions & Answers

By Jeanie Gold

The etiology of creation and,
The orderliness of the universe,

The vast world of nature
With its miraculous design,

The anatomical-physiological
Complexity of human beings

Developed into full-form
By the mere union of two cells;

Each invite queries of deep inquiry,
Not easily answered.

How did it all come to be? ... and ...
Did anything exist before material creation?

Those of science and those of faith
Offer perspectives and stories.

In post-Newtonian physics,
Einstein spoke of a Spirit, manifest
In the laws of the universe.

His protégé, David Bohm, theorized
An invisible, implicate order giving birth
To the visible, explicate world.

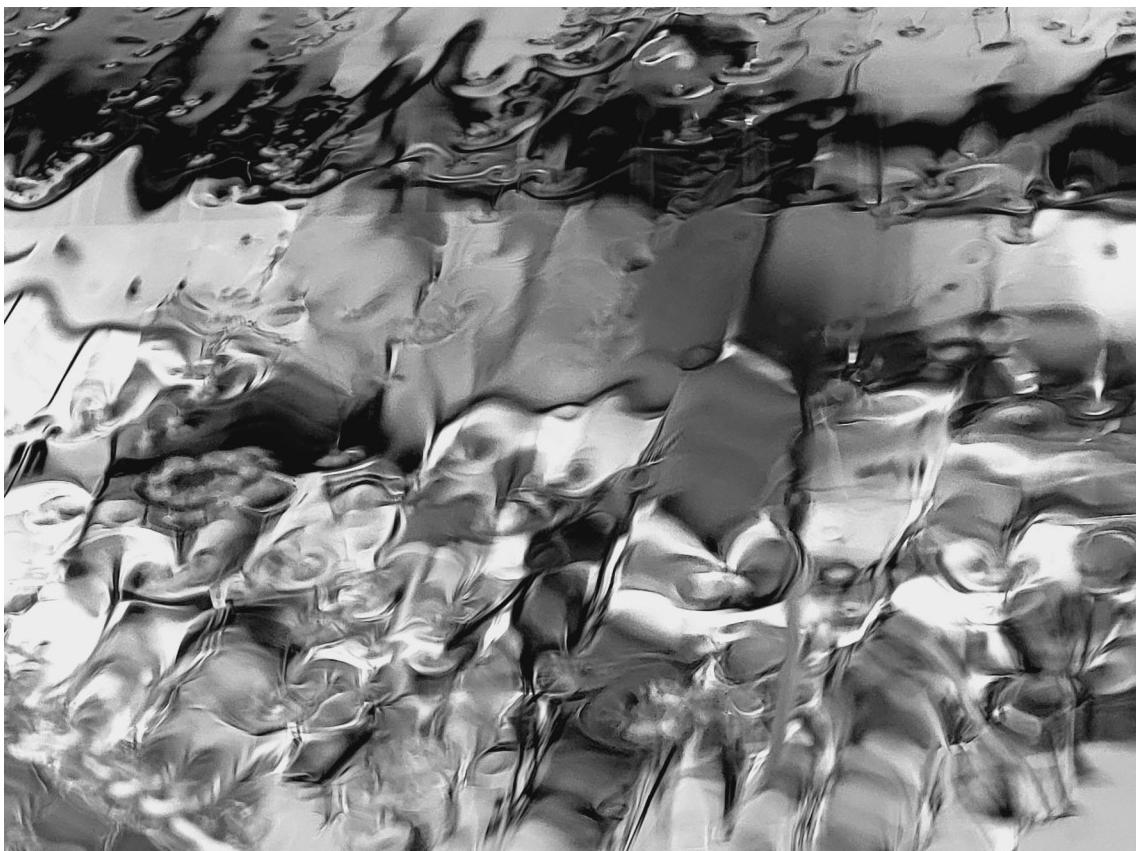
Religious traditions of East and West
Provide scriptural teachings
About spirit and matter,

And also, numerous names and words
Associated with a cosmic source
Or a purified, perfected mind.

In choosing to refrain from distraction,
Spurred by analytical dissection of words,

I sit each day in quiet stillness
With my eyes closed,
On a journey deep within
In order to uncover, one day,

Enlightened awareness,
From my own direct experience.



Photograph by David Saiget

Already Everything

By Jillian Gold

After perfect darkness ruptures
We squint into it All
We cry, and re-learn
To chart the confusion
Of life on the outside
With everyday giants
Sea & Sky where we
Are so suddenly tiny
In this realm of light
We grope for wholeness
As we knew it before
We ever felt a need
And realization was simply actualized
Instead of processed mentally
Back when we were already Everything.

But aren't we still?
And how many skeletons of ego need we shed that we might notice?

From inside the Prince Albert wreck, looking out (Roatan, Honduras)

Portal to the Deep // Photograph by Jude Nel



Fastened for Journeys

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*



Photograph by Kinsey Brown—*F/V Lucid Dream*

It probably started as sand
As silica
Maybe, derived from the Sea
And the bronze, and the brass . . . mined
From somewhere . . . forged
Into a circular shape
And the brass and the glass . . .
Became a Porthole, bound for something
Fastened for Journeys

Let's imagine the hull
When I think of Portholes
Somehow, I imagine a wood hull,
And the Portholes fastened
Around a hole, cut through wood
Specially selected, and skillfully placed
For Journeys

Portholes looking out, letting light in
On Journeys, on trips . . . doing
The occupational Journeys
Wood boats still do
Portholes looking out
Letting light in

Portholes daylighting
Sometimes reflecting the Sea
Or a bronze round mirror, at night
When the 12-volt light

In the forecastle is on
Reflecting the image
Of your face, or . . .
Sometimes even during the day,
While underway
You can see the reflection of your own face
In the Porthole
Along with the changing view
Steadily going by

Let's imagine
An old wood boat . . . with
Portholes looking out
Letting in the light
On occupational Journeys

I remember such a boat, She was in her sixties,
When I walked aboard her in the 1980's,
Long lining For Halibut in the Seward gully,
And the Portlock Banks off Kodiak Island
Her beams inside the forecastle
Were thick as bent trees
And her forecastle Portholes
Were as big around as a face
Often washed by the Sea

She was about 70 feet in length, Schooner style
House aft, with a steadyng sail
Everything was done *Old Style*, stuck gear

And except for the conventional line hauler
Everything was of a strict *Square Head* tradition

She was proud and painted
Yacht white, except for the trim,
Which changed many times
And for decades well maintained
At her birthplace . . . somewhere
Near Seattle
Built of Yellow Cedar and Douglas Fir
Somewhere around the 1920's,
With the rising Tide of boatwrights
Before the ebbing Tide
Of War,
When I heard she was called into service
Out west, aiding the troops at the Aleutians
Her Portholes looking out
Letting in the light

I think she could pack about
60,000 pounds of iced Halibut
Everything was butchered and poke iced
And layered in ice in checkered bins in the hold
Designed for this practice by decades

I remember, it was May 1987,
We were long lining off the Portlock Banks
I remember the price was two bucks a pound
For Halibut delivered to Kodiak
Which quickly ran out of cash at the bank
At the spontaneous Halibut festival
With her proudly tied to the outside dock

Her portholes looking out
Letting in the light

I left her
With my fat check and sea bag,
Shortly after that time,
To go back Salmon fishing
I sometimes saw her in Seward, or Homer
Randomly, for a few more years after that

Her portholes
Still looking out
Letting in the light

Sometime later, I heard she was lost
Somewhere off Cape Alitak,
South of Kodiak Island
On another long line trip
So well-seasoned to Storms

Now I think again
Of her big wooden beams
In her forecastle
And her portholes
Fastened for Journeys
Looking out
Letting in the light
And the glass,
From the sand, and the silica
Fastened for Journeys
Derived
and returned
To the Sea



The Inside Passage // Photograph by Talia Sokolik—F/V *Zephyr*

I'd Just as Sooner Have a Schooner

By Gerald *Pieface* Masolini

Halibut schooners were mostly built in Seattle between the early 19 teens and the early 1920s. The main idea of their design was to be a top-notch sea boat that could be taken to Alaska to catch a load of iced halibut, then return safely home to Seattle or Prince Rupert.

This explains why the wheelhouse was back toward the stern, out of reach of waves coming over the bow in bad weather. Living quarters were under the foredeck, up in the bow. This was called the fo'c'sle (*forecastle*). It wasn't really much of a castle: 4 bunks, a table, a sink and a stove.

These boats are long, deep, and skinny; they stick down in the water deeper than most boats. This makes them hard to roll over, especially when loaded with halibut or a tank full of crab. Waves would sometimes wash across the deck but would quickly drain out the scuppers (*holes along the edge of the deck*). Scuppers are very important; designed to clear the deck of any wave before the next wave comes.

The skinniness also allows schooners to slice easily through the water. Boat builders back then gave a lot of attention to the appearance of a boat, giving them the lines of a swan. Pictured is a model of the schooner *Sentinel* that Skip Mallory and I bought in 1971 in Coos Bay, Oregon. It had been fishing tuna (Albacore) off the west coast. We ran it down to our old home port of Noyo, at Fort Bragg, for cleaning and painting (that's all we could afford). Then we ran it up to Alaska for halibut and winter crab fishing. Our main asset was youth (25 and 26). In our minds, we were ready to take on the world. We were so proud of that boat that we knew that we could run it to China if we had the notion. Unlike now, traveling expenses were not a major consideration; as Skip said, "Fuel was 21 cents a gallon and hot cake flour was cheap."



Photograph by Sue Masolini

The *Sentinel* was built in 1920: wooden, 60 feet long, 14 feet wide, and drew 9 feet when empty ("drew" means how far the boat stuck down in the water). When we bought it in 1971, it had shrunk to 57 feet long; it had been used as a tugboat which caused the stern to be rebuilt with a stubbier design.

The *Sentinel*'s engine was a WWII surplus 671 GMC (*Jimmy*) diesel. These diesels were designed to win the war: very dependable and relatively easy to work on. And they were everywhere: in most fishing boats of the time, in sawmills, generators, etc., etc. We were confident that if we broke down, we could find *Jimmy* parts and an experienced *Jimmy* mechanic. *Jimmys* were built in a variety of sizes, all with the same size pistons (71 centimeters diameter). There were one 71s (*one piston*), 271s, 371s, 471s, 671s, 871s, 1271s and 1671s; all parts were interchangeable. We ran them slow to make them last. When Skip had his next boat built (*the Nip'N'Tuck*), it had a 1271 main with two 371 auxiliaries.

(continues on next page)

My first boat, the Borealis, out of Fort Bragg in the late 60s, was a 31-foot double ended troller; it had a 271 Jimmy. I fished with a fleet of 20 or 30 other trollers; we moved up and down the coast following the salmon. One day we were all traveling together. Everybody, it seemed, had a Jimmy and we all ran them at about 1550 rpms. Except Cecil Stillwell, who had the Wolverine . . . It was built to be a rum runner (*smuggler*) in the prohibition days, so its hull was long and skinny . . . made for speeding away from the law. Cecil ran his 671 at 1100 rpms, just so he could slow down and stay with the fleet. This shows how much hull shape affects speed (and fuel economy).

Schooners did have a drawback when fishing winter crabs out in the gulf. The lack of a wheelhouse up forward didn't allow anywhere for the crew to hide behind when a wave came over the bow. We just hung on to the rigging while it passed by.

Skip always ran the boat when fishing, and he set the pots (*traps*) in a line facing into the prevailing winter winds. That way we could still pull pots by moving very slowly into the wind. Our crab tank was below decks in the center of the boat and was always "tanked down" (*full of water*), adding even more stability to a boat built to be stable. In fishermen talk, we just "slobbered" along at a slow rpm, pulling pots, tossing the crabs into the tank, rebaiting the pot, and setting it back in water. At that time, Skip would have maneuvered the boat up to the next crab pot buoy, for us deck apes to grab.

Skip's brother, John, and I ran the deck. I always thought John Mallory was the best deckhand in the world. In the thick of the snow and dark of the night he never whimpered or had an upside-down smile. Sometimes he would do a little dance and sing us the *Batman* song just to pep us up in the wee hours.

Looking back, I'd still *just as sooner have a schooner.**

Pieface** Postscript:

* *The witty title is not my work. It is from my deceased wife, and mother of my boys: Diana*

** *Gerald Pieface Masolini . . .* just so you readers know, that "Pieface" stuff doesn't come from my worshipful love of home-made pies. A long time back, I wrote a weekly piece in the Cordova Times called "Cordova Cooks". It was a tongue-in-cheek thing about our good old hometown, ending with a favorite recipe. I'd sign off with an assortment of woop-ti-doo middle names, just to see if anyone was paying attention. One day I overheard Neil Schultz telling someone how those names amused him. So I continued on with the unusual middle names until I came to one that fit: *Pieface*. I really like boats, and one of my favorites was/is (*I hope*) in Santa Barbara's boat harbor, owned by a great fisherman and character, Mike McCorkle. That boat was worthy of several fancy names, but Mike named it the *Pieface*, making it all the more special.

Not to create any confusion, I still worship homemade pies - in case one might be headed my way.

GPM

The Story of the Alaska Steamship Lines

By Cathy Sherman



From the collection of the Cordova Historical Society

Before the 1870's, all except a few hardy explorers, whaling captains, and sealers shunned Alaska's coast. A few venturesome traders opened stores in the southeastern part of the Territory and an occasional fur company vessel or revenue cutter anchored in the harbors. Alaskan shores were inhospitable, uncharted, and subject to gales and treacherous tides. A company would have to have a pressing reason for inaugurating a steamship line to a region, which offered such barren promise.

Nonetheless, regular boat service from U.S. ports to Sitka began in 1867 following purchase of the Territory from Russia and the dispatch of occupation troops.

By 1885 the Pacific Coast Steamship Co. had developed considerable summer tourist trade to Sitka and Alaskan travel increased. 1800 tourists visited the Territory during the summer of 1892. And increased business meant one thing — competition.

In December 1894, a group composed of Charles E. Peabody, Captain George Roberts, Captain Melville Nichols, George Lent, Walter Oakes, and Frank R. Burns (who later became the steam line agent for Cordova, and a long-time resident) incorporated the Alaska Steamship Company in Port Townsend. By February 1895, they had a ship booked with full cargo ready to sail north. Pacific Coast Steamship Co. immediately dropped their rates.

Closer to home, The Kennecott Copper Corporation needed to move the copper ore to its company-owned smelters in Tacoma. The Corporation acquired Northwestern Steamship Company and, on January 1, 1908, merged with Alaska Steamship Company to control 15 steamers: a total of 28,160 tons, the largest fleet of its kind operating exclusively to Alaska.

(continues on next page)

With the Copper River Northwest Railway in place, their acquisition of Alaska Steam, and the construction of a new wharf in Cordova, the Corporation had everything in place to move its product. The Cordova wharf had a capacity of 10,000 tons and was 725 feet long by 80 feet wide. Vessels arrived with more merchandise than had ever been received in our part of Alaska. It was nothing for a ship to unload six flat cars of lumber, coal, and cement – all for the railroad.

Now passengers were no longer gold seekers, but men and women who had made their stake, professional people, tourists, and others from a more prosperous layer of society. In 1909, the year of the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle, the company arranged special excursions and featured, as a fresh attraction, a trip on the railroad from Cordova to view Miles and Childs Glaciers.

The passage to Alaska was one of the most challenging in the world. It had narrow, winding tide-swept channels, rock pinnacles and, in places, the additional hazard of icebergs. Gale-swept open seas had to be crossed in winter leading to dangerous conditions of icing on the vessels. Another difficulty was the manner in which the copper ore was prepared for shipping.

The mines at this time were shipping a concentrate instead of crude ore, specifically from LaTouche—because the ore there was a very low grade. The method of concentration was a patented process using what was known as Barrett oil. The end product was a wet, oily, slippery mass, somewhat like mud. In heavy seas, vessels laden with the ore concentrate would often have the cargo shift. Along with cargos of salmon and barrels of herring, shifting cargo was proving fatal.

World War II had a great impact on the Alaska Steamship Company. A Cordova resident remembers sailing from Seattle two days before Pearl Harbor. When the steamer arrived at Ketchikan it received orders that it was to be painted gray and wait for a convoy.

After the war, passenger business continued to decline and, in 1954, the Alaska Steam Line suspended passenger service completely. Freight service continued until 1971 when the company went out of business, but prior to that the dock in Cordova went up in flames in the 1968 fire.

The importance of the role the line played in Alaska history should not be forgotten. Year after year, each passenger list contained a who's who of territorial luminaries plus an assortment of home-bodies traveling because of family or business obligations. Riding the Alaska Line was like being in a good hotel – the ships provided tasty food, social times – all one could ask for.

The mingling of people from the territory on the Alaska Line played a part in romance and political maneuvers. The ships brought residents from scattered districts together giving them an opportunity to get acquainted. People danced, played cards, had a drink, and dined with others from all over Alaska.

It was a gallant era when ships and sailors braved the northern seas to serve the people of Alaska. And we owe the Alaska Steam line a debt of gratitude, for many a Cordova pioneer first set foot in our community stepping from the deck of an Alaskan Steam Line vessel.



Photograph by Sam Bair

Barnacles

By Chris Byrnes

Barnacles for breakfast
Barnacles for lunch
Didn't know this little boat could grow so many
Later tonight
Floating again
I'll look through the porthole and smile
Because I'll be having spaghetti for dinner

Monsters of the Deep

By Harbor, Kayti, and Lander Ammerman

Monsters of the deep
Creeping toward my feet
Haunting all my sleep
Devour with their teeth

Dangerous, spiky, ferocious, smooth,
Squishy, bumpy, lumpy, crude
They put me in a frightened mood.

Squiggle, wiggle, swim, and glide
From this porthole I can't hide
This is an unpleasant ride

From my porthole I can see
Monsters swimming after me.



Illustration by Polly Keats

All Rocks Are Good

By Jillian Gold

I cried at a fisheries exhibit
At the Monterey Aquarium
Just before moving to Cordova
And maybe because no others were present
A space mostly panels of words
Not apt to trump bioluminescence
Gave me room enough for tears
Over tainted environment
And unfortunate bycatch

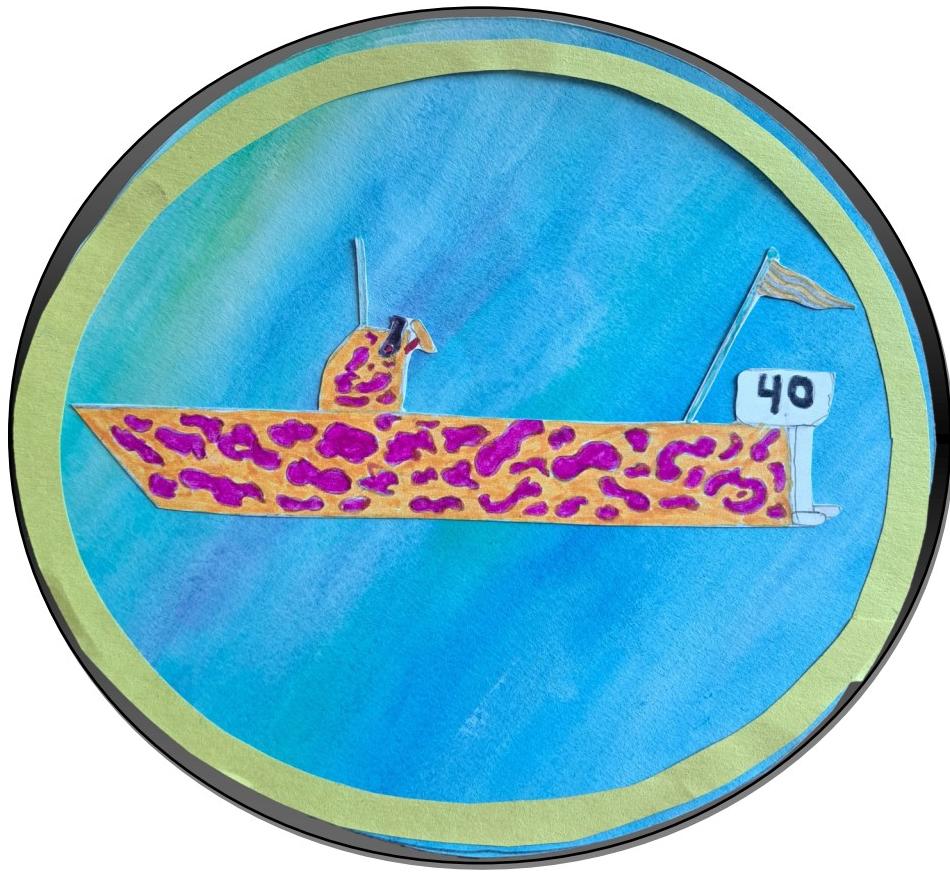
And I, on my way
To Prince William Sound
Without an A, B, or C
Of commercial fishing language,
Pictured my destination
All beached leatherbacks
Enmeshed in industry's carelessness

Too often we forget the crystal's lattice.
A face, swollen with anger, fires at a sea lion
One face among many;
Another face breathes life directly
Into the mouth of a murre
Accidentally entangled in gear
All rocks are good, a little girl once said.

If we could just bottle and display it
All of life might be safe
From exploits and tragedy
We could lick our ice cream
And smile at the sea otters
Living behind glass



Photograph by Chris Byrnes



On the Lake by Leif Solberg // Colored Pencil & Watercolor

OPEN YOUR EYES! !

By Leif Solberg (age 10)

1. What I see out of my porthole is a drake and hen mallard, a dog leaping up, some least sand-pipers, and the endless opportunities. ☺
2. But ☹... those are all the good things I see. I also see a *MTN Dew* can, oil dregs, and plastic bags.

1 = nature ☺

2 = pollution ☹

The ideal world is number 1.

Flower Anatomy

By Cristina Reo // Education Specialist —Prince William Sound Science Center

Flower, flower in my hair,
Anther, anther everywhere.
Now that spring has touched the ground,
Bees are fluttering all around.
Fertilizing all the flowers,
Working, up late, all the hours.
Spring is beautiful and brings forth new life,
Summer's beauty is twice as nice.
Then comes fall and winter too,
Back to spring, a year renewed.

Flower, flower in my hair,
Anther, anther everywhere.
Filament, Anther - Stamen,
Are parts I will be namen'.
Ovule, Ovary - Pistil,
Are parts that look ever blissful.
Bright green sepals and purple petals
Flowers parts, extra special.
Resting on a strong peduncle,
Flowers are so ever humble.
Flower, flower in my hair,
Anther, anther everywhere.

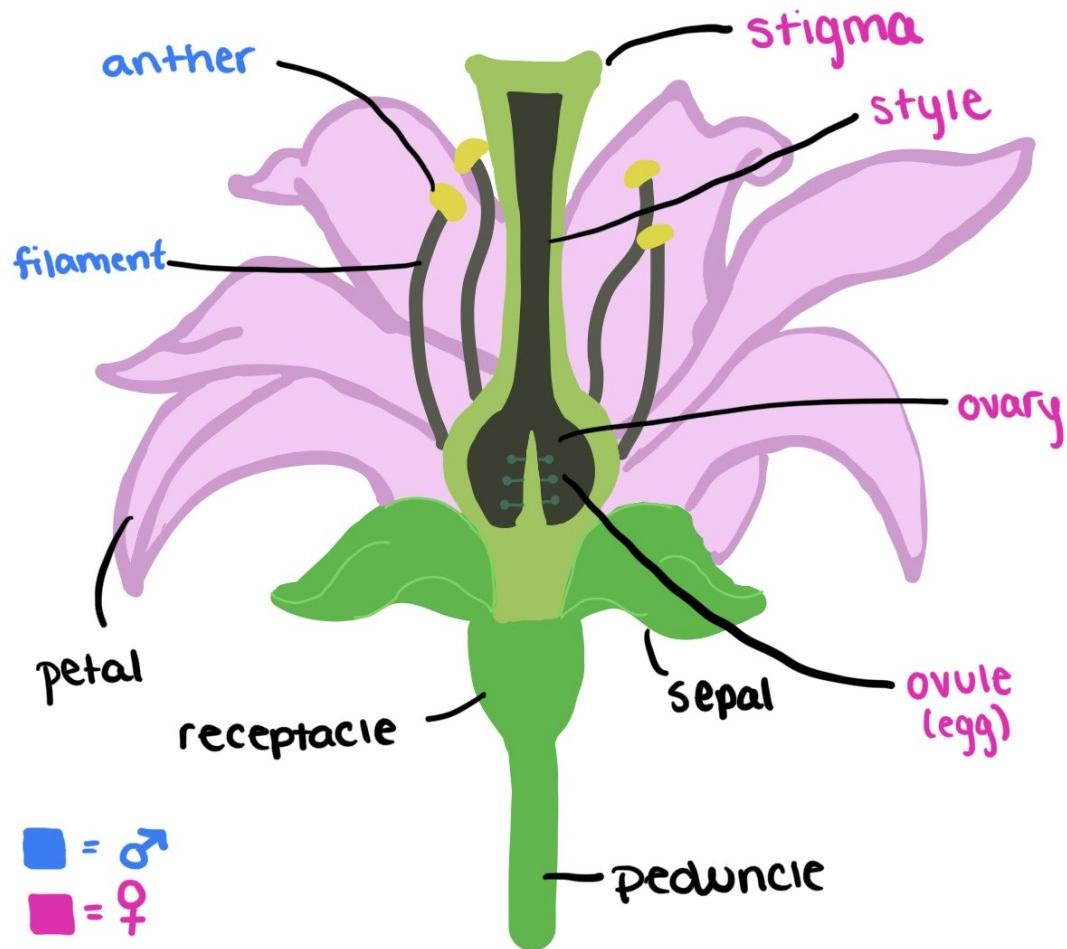
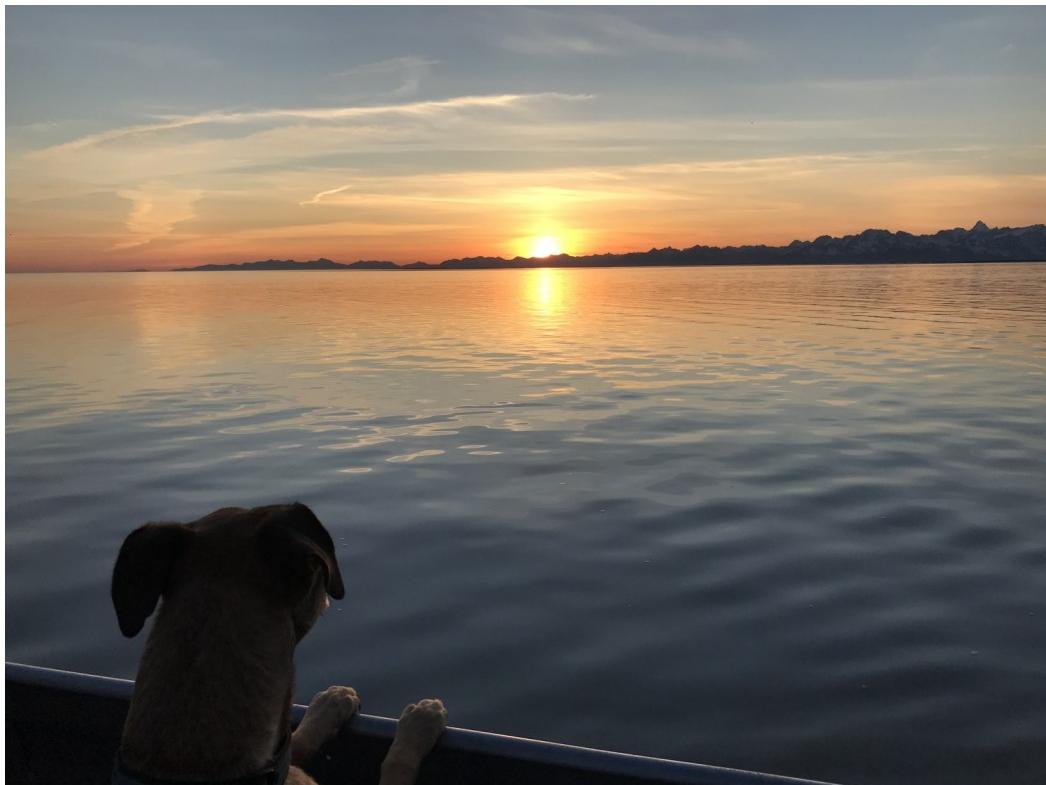


Illustration by Cristina Reo

Value The View

By Erin Brennan

It's easy to admire
Bright, stunning flowers
Plump, ripe vegetables
But what of admiration for the labor
Required for their growth
How much tending?
How much rain?
How much sun?
The strength in adversity
To bloom where challenges arose
Appreciate the end result
But cherish the journey



Oakley at Sunset // Photograph by Jenny Nakao—F/V Zephyr

Encounters on the East Fork

By Ron Andersen

When I left the Denali National Park Visitor's Center with a shuttle-bus load of visitors bound for Wonder Lake, the sky was overcast with a hint of possible clearing later, kind of a typical day in Denali, if there is such a thing.

The first forty miles of the park road have their own special beauty, but because things get better, at least in my mind, scenery-wise and animal-wise, further in the park, I tend to not get very excited early on. The passengers do, especially at mile 10, when I tell them that the summit of the small snow-covered peak about 80 miles distant, is the highest point in North America. Its 20,310-foot peak makes it the third highest peak on all seven continents. It is also the second highest vertical rising mountain in the world, rising a bit over 18,000 feet from its base, 2,000 feet above sea level. When we get to Wonder Lake, 26 miles from the summit, the 18,000-foot rise is the view they will see.

As we climbed to the 3,895-foot summit of Sable Pass at mile 38.5, we left the forests behind. When we passed over the summit, Denali came into view, much bigger and closer. Almost immediately, several voices yelled "Stop!" A few caribou stood on a late lingering snow patch, noses almost on the snow, the cold temperature a refuge from the bothersome flies and mosquitoes. Beyond them some Dall sheep fed on Sable Mountain. I stopped.

4.2 miles beyond the summit, the many small streams draining about 12 miles of the Alaska Range on our left, gradually braid together with each other and with the East Fork River coming from the East Fork Glacier. They are then forced, as if through a funnel, into one channel as it flows into a narrow canyon through the Outer Range on our right. The short, high East Fork Bridge cross-

es the narrow canyon at its upstream end. Several hundred feet downstream from the bridge, the canyon widens. A sloping ridge or land slide extends about 300 feet from the left side of the river, forcing the river into a fairly sharp turn to the right. The river makes a broad turn to the north around the toe of the slope and unbraids into many channels on the wide riverbed beyond, eventually joining the West Fork of the Toklat and continuing to its confluence with the Tanana River nearly 100 miles away, 50 miles below the town of Nenana.

When we arrived at the bridge, a bull caribou stood mid-channel about 100 feet downstream in a couple of feet of water. His sides heaved like a bellows. His tongue hung out like bedding from a Paris bedroom window. His eyes fixed on something I couldn't see. The passengers quickly moved as close as they could to the windows, forming an almost solid wall of heads, shoulders, arms, and giant VCRs. All aimed to get the best view possible of what promised to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, even if they had to view it in black and white through a viewfinder to preserve it, allowing them to experience it again.

The bus tipped to the right.

As I slowly drove the bus onto the bridge and stopped, I followed the caribou's gaze . . . and there on the shore, about 50 feet from their prey, two wolves returned its stare. "Look, two wolves below us . . . Oh! and a small grizzly behind them!" Apparently, the wolves had chased the caribou upstream for some distance, the caribou, with its long legs, running in the river, the wolves running on the gravel bars. Exhausted, the caribou stopped to rest where he was when we came upon him.

(continues on next page)



Painting by Cadence Moffitt // Acrylics

The wolves intimidated the bear even though they mostly ignored it. Whenever the bear tried to get closer, the wolves would turn quickly and look at it, causing the bear to turn around and run about fifty or sixty feet from them before facing the wolves again, then stand on its hind legs like a human. A few seconds later it would drop down, move around a bit, and repeat the cycle. After several approach and retreat cycles, the wolves, sensing a possible chance to take the caribou, dashed into the river, but before they could reach it, the caribou bolted upstream under the bridge. I moved the bus to the other side of the bridge.

The bus tipped to the left.

The wolves quickly caught up. In the shallower water, they had the advantage. One jumped and grabbed the caribou's nose. Its weight and yanking brought the caribou to its knees. The other grabbed its right rear leg and hung on. The caribou froze, statue-like. The wolves jerked and tugged, trying to get the caribou all the way down, but were not successful. At last, in a burst of energy, the caribou stood abruptly. The wolf on its nose lost its grip and was unable to grab it again.

(continues on next page)

The hind wolf was forced to let go. A hard kick almost knocked it off its feet. It ran, limping, out of range of the hard-hitting hooves. The caribou made a jump turn and raced back under the bridge. When it reached belly-deep water, it stopped and faced the wolves, who soon stood a few feet away. I moved the bus back to the other side.

The bus tilted to the right.

A moment later, the wolves launched themselves at the caribou. Unable to move quickly enough to avoid the attack, the exhausted caribou was hit hard and lost its balance. The wolves forced its head under water and held it there, drowning it. They pulled it to the opposite shore and up the small beach until their rumps hit the bank at the top of the beach, leaving most of the hindquarters in the river. They struggled to rip away the skin to get at the meat. A movement downstream caught my eye. "Here comes another bear!" I shouted (*rather excitedly for me*), as a very large grizzly came into view around the toe of the slope. Heads and cameras swiveled in the direction I was looking.

The river ran against the near-vertical wall of the ridge he had just come around, forcing him to cross. The scent of the wolves and their kill reached him on the downstream breeze. Following his nose, he stood up to see better, then ran up the beach a bit, plunged into the river at a very deep spot, disappeared from sight, popped to the surface, regained his footing on the bottom, got out of the river, and charged toward the wolves who were attempting to get some nourishment from "their" kill before the bear made it "his." With the arrival of the big bear, the little bear loped upstream out of harm's way.

Both wolves shifted positions around the caribou so they were able to keep their eyes on the rapidly approaching bear. They knew they had little time left. Only when the bear reached the kill did they slowly back to the river's edge. Ignoring the wolves, the bear straddled the carcass. He used his feet as anchors and his neck to lift and push the carcass up against the cliff. Still straddling the carcass, he dropped down onto it and began to feed where the wolves left off. The wolves crossed the river, turned, and watched the bear on their kill for a minute or two, before walking slowly under the bridge and up the river. I wondered what was going on in their brains.

A quick glance in my rear-view mirror showed busses that departed the Visitor Center after us at 30-minute intervals. I let the passengers know that we were over an hour behind schedule and had to move on to let the other busses get a better view. We had had the best view of all. As I pulled away, the wall of body parts and VCRs came apart and the excited passengers retook their seats.

The bus leveled out.

From the bridge, the road rises steeply to the rest stop at the top of Polychrome Pass, 2.6 miles and 650 feet higher than the bridge. The road, cut into the side of the mountain . . . two-way, one lane, no guard rails, a long scary drop to the riverbed below on the left . . . causes anxious comments and quick intakes of breath. Rounding a corner, we encountered another bus coming down the hill toward us, which caused the passengers to gasp again. We both stopped. The bus coming up the hill has the right-of-way. Surveying the situation, I pulled my mirror against the bus as the other bus began backing up the hill very slowly, looking for a spot to pull over far enough to give me room to pass. Places to pass are few.

(continues on next page)

Seeing a spot, the other bus inched over and stopped. The discomfort level of his passengers increased rapidly as he positioned the bus so I could squeeze past. He pulled his mirror against the bus and waved us forward. When the busses were nose to nose, I stopped again to assess how close I had to be to him in order to squeeze through the space between the steep bank coming down to the road and the other bus. Satisfied I could make it, I inched the bus forward very slowly. We passed without mishap, but the distance from my tucked in mirror to the other bus was barely an inch.

The bus exhaled.

While on the bridge, I had looked up ahead and seen a red fox trotting down the hill toward the bus. Before it reached the bridge, it turned to go down to the river, but halted when it became aware of the bear and the wolves. It sat for a bit, yawned, then lay down; forefeet stretched out in front, and dropped its head onto its paws as if it was no big deal. A few minutes later, it stood and trotted back up the road the way it had come.

I kept this encounter to myself.



Impermanence by Steve Schoonmaker // Pastels

Through the Porthole

By Sammy Stripes

Through the porthole of time and space
Watching the cosmos rearrange

Astronauts see the history of impermanence
Continents divide and wash into the sea
On this verdant earth with you and me

The elixir of life, Babi's quest,
The incomplete musings of the rising golden sun that Alex climbs, unable to grasp
Youthhood musings pondered through the porthole of peoples' productions

I read the pages, now turning faster than I can catch them
A walk in the woods tells me of the lines being left out in the rapid skim

Mud is no longer just mud but was once a towering volcano
Standing for eons above the rapid heart beaters

The quest for knowledge is Eve's destruction
And a male priest's livelihood teaching the dominion over sheep

Pages turned and reconstructed a thousand times
To make him a fisher of men

Gains against mankind's efforts as he's promised eternity gained from abuse of the impermanent
They are betrayed that the quest for the grail is the only true quest for knowledge

Soldiers led from the ravages of Succession Wars
To a land where they would be no threat to the new king
But they burned the libraries of Alexandria
And the merits of Plato's musings on the location and scope of Lemuria

Knowledge of People of the Sea more ancient than Noah's flood wiped from the view
But why build a boat? For as deltas flood, those atop the pyramid are most secure
Their secrets of cedars obscured and buried deeper than Cousteau could ever delve

Breadcrumbs in pages and habits of mankind
Through our love of the grand Greek pillars standing as the ancients once did
Adorning the halls of the druids who walked naked before Adam was invented

The astronaut looks down with longing
For that return to circadian rhythm inside the big blue and green orb
Watching, recognizing through all the connections of the wind and tides swirling,
The masses assembling in the eddies at slack tide of seasonal storms

They see through the porthole and recognize that the quest is complete
Symbiosis, the cup carved to be shared
Watersheds unpoisoned to feed the masses

(continues on next page)

Fish delivering deep ocean prizes born of volcanic mud
Back to the land to see the trees grow tall and produce the rain
The rain which is returned to feed the giants of Jotunheim,
The giant glaciers booming as they flow into the sea bring the fish home
Cycles more ancient than the words to express them

'The chemistry of life on earth

Cyclical

Turbulent

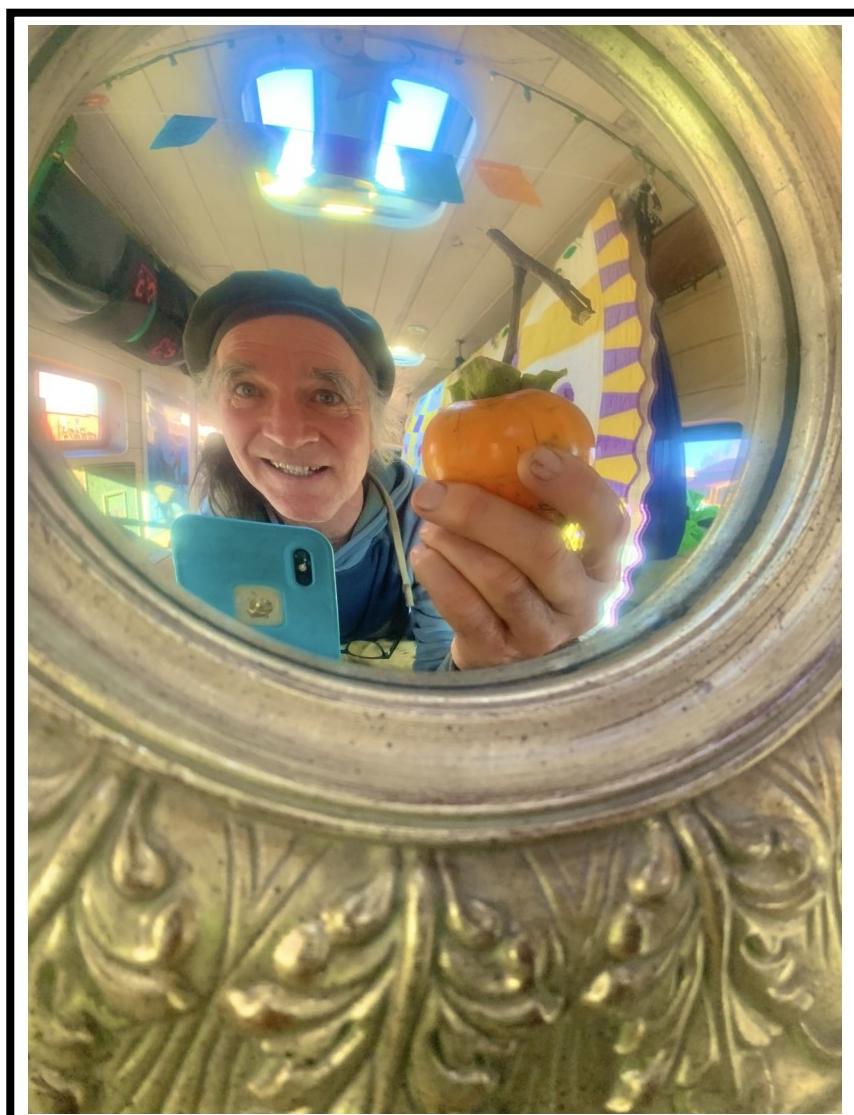
Unerring in its uncertainty

And yet compared to the cosmos,

Through the portal the astronaut sees

Beside the allegory to alchemy

That the earth is our greatest meaning of the elixir of everlasting life.



Photograph by David Lynn Grimes



Illustration by Jude Nel

Leaving in Between

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*

Leaving
In between
The breeze switches
Right at the Tide change
As the Sun leaves
For eminent
In between
Leaving a Day
Into Night

But, only from an Earth's
Perspective . . . rotating
Seasonal orbits to
In between
Leaving a Now
And a Then
A Below and Above
Leaving
In between
To the Tide change

Leaving
In between
To seasons new
To a tunnel through
Snowy melting mountains
Leaving
In between

Leaving the use of a Day
To a brand new Night
Riding the steel of a transient *Aurora* . . . bending back
Like Her namesake's transient motion

Leaving
In between
To switch with the breeze
At the Tide change.



Illustration by Sofia Stopeck—*F/V Abby Louise*



Swirling Seals by Hasan Bowman (age 9)

Through a Porthole . . .

By Christina L. Anderson—*F/V Captains Choice*

Perhaps it's more than just stars seen through the porthole . . .

It's the:

Cloudy day . . . holding in the heat, trying to stop wind in its tracks

It's the:

Wondering . . . how soon the snow-peaked mountain in August will melt to keep the cold waters flowing

It's the:

Deck sitters . . . soaking sun to warm their cooled hearts filled by chilly shoreline waterfalls

It's the:

Jumpers . . . all colors & shape, wait, three red-necked phalaropes 2 miles offshore

It's the:

Gold seeking radio group . . . stirring the brown muddy water for passage

It's the:

Stick channels . . . twists & turns that bring us home



Octopus Through a Porthole by Rob Ammerman // Acrylics



Photograph by David Lynn Grimes

Open the Door

By Oshiana Black

I just want us fly, but never we do -
I can see you on the porch where I left you.
How cemented and discombobulated can a life be?

Tina Turner thought the only *way out is through the door*
Into the night, she fled veering semi-trucks on the midnight freeway with 36 cents,
A gas card and her Name
Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, take refuge in the mystic law of life - was her chant

Then it came to me - that it is nature to cling
Do I still see you? A meager flicker flashing through window
Little one, remember this teensy light, and life, like a symphony -
A finite, treasured, flaming dance

Will we comprehend the promising lilacs?
Hear the howling hemlocks?
Feel the far-reaching fortresses of hope?

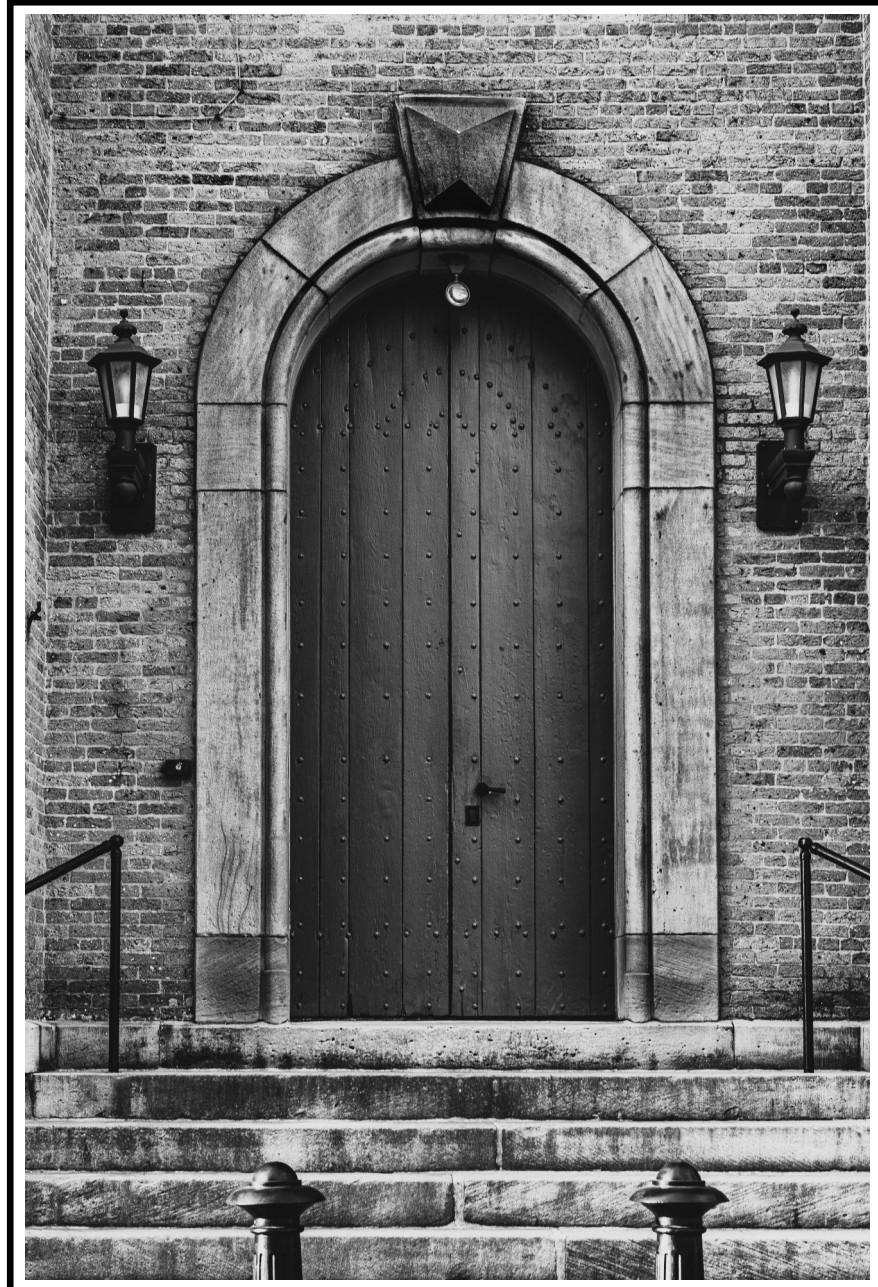
Only if we open the door.

Hitchhikers and Dead Friends Go Slow in the Black Hills

By Jack Donachy

shimmering emerald hummingbird
red paintbrush, lilies
bison piles, cricket frogs, bees

wind, miles, words
thumb swallowed in the abyss
out on route 16 the sun is sinking
headlights blink on
taillights



County Jailhouse Door - Clarion, Pennsylvania // By Jack Donachy



Photograph by David Saiget